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THE AESTHETIC FUNCTION OF THE STYLE OF MASKING AS USED IN V.S. NAIPAUL'S
COLLECTION OF SKETCHES, *MIGUEL STREET*

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ABSTRACT

The study is based on the assumption that literary style is paramount to literary communication and the meaning we derive out of a work of literature. Literary meaning cannot therefore be divorced from literary style. The purpose of the study is to examine how the style of masking communicates meaning in V.S. Naipaul's collection of sketches, *Miguel Street*. The technique of masking is analyzed to show its aesthetic function in the text. The main objective of the study is to evaluate the text and show how the technique is used by the writer to communicate meaning and artistic vision. The rationale of the study is based on the recognition of Naipaul as one of the best world writers and more important that though his works have received extensive literary attention, little has been done on the aesthetic function of the style of masking in the text under study. The study therefore gives a new direction of reading Naipaul's works and thus contributes not only to the understanding of Naipaul's idiosyncratic manner of artistic communication but also to the richness of his literature. The sampled text was purposively chosen based on the aim of the study. The study is grounded in the New Historicism literary theory and more specifically the theory's tenets that emphasize the study of literary works from a historical context.

KEY WORDS: Masking , Style, Meaning, Vision, Literary Sketch

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INTRODUCTION

Literature, whether written or oral, uses language creatively so as to communicate meaning. Style therefore becomes crucial in communicating the writer's meaning. It is through the literary style adopted by the writer that he/she is able to communicate meaning and the artistic vision to his/her readers. Leech and Short (1981) argue that the study of style cannot entirely rely on quantitative data, neither can it ultimately do without them.

Their arguments may seem to leave very little footing hold for quantitative methods in the study of literary style. But on the other side there still remains the basic fact that without quantitative confirmation,

statements on style lack the support of concrete evidence. Statistical analysis, therefore, becomes an essential and important tool in stylistic description.

Style therefore consists of the choices that the writer makes from the repertoire of language; it basically falls in the domain of language use; for instance what choices are made by a particular writer in a particular text. In literature it is possible to distinguish between what the writer chooses to talk about and how he chooses to talk about it.

The literary communication in literature is done through carefully selected diction. In literature, therefore, it is hard to separate style from meaning.

This study examines how the style of masking used in Naipaul's collection of literary sketches, *Miguel Street* communicates meaning. According to Halliday (1978) style plays a significant role in communicating meaning in literature. It is through the selected style that the deeper meaning of a work of literature can be unraveled.

Studies on V.S Naipaul's literature have mainly focused on general issues and particularly Naipaul's pessimism (King 1963, Ramchand 1976, White 1975) Others have narrowed to what they view as Naipaul's overstated humour (Farahmandian (2012)). This study is more specific. It delineates the style of masking as used in Naipaul's collection of sketches, *Miguel Street*, and examines how the style forms the backbone of Naipaul's literary communication in the text.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is grounded in the literary theory of New Historicism. According to Myers (1989) New Historicism is a literary theory based on the idea that literature should be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic. Based on the literary criticism of Stephen Greenblatt and influenced by the philosophy of Michel Foucault, New Historicism acknowledges not only that a work of literature is influenced by its author's times and circumstances, but that the critic's response to that work is also influenced by his environment, beliefs, and prejudices.

A New Historicist looks at literature in a wider historical context, examining both how the writer's times affected the work and how the work reflects the writer's times, in turn recognizing that current cultural contexts color that critic's conclusions.

New Historicism, then, underscores the impermanence of literary criticism. Current literary criticism is affected by and reveals the beliefs of our times in the same way that literature reflects and is reflected by its own historical contexts. Mikics (2007) notes that Foucault's idea that structures of thought shape everyone and everything within a culture did influence New historicism as a literary theory.

Veese (1989) summarizes the tenets of New historicism theory as; interpretation of works of literature from a historical perspective, the appreciation of how the historical context affect the crafting of works of literature, that the writer's artistic vision is affected by time and space, the writer's viewpoint is influenced by his/her historical background, each text is only one example of many types of discourses that reveal history

The study uses these key assumptions and theorizations of the New historicism literary theory to evaluate V.S. Naipaul's text, *Miguel Street* and examine how the techniques of masking and calypso illuminate Naipaul's intended meaning and historical imagination.

The Aesthetic Function of the Style of Masking as used in V.S. Naipaul's collection of sketches, Miguel Street

In *Miguel street* V.S. Naipaul uses the style of masking to dramatize the ironies that surround the different inhabitants of Miguel street. Through this style, Naipaul is able to show how the inhabitants of Miguel street and those of post war Trinidad are victims of society's lack of defined goals or avenues of social mobility. The dramatized society is unable to empower its citizens or create a sense of self fulfillment in them; society thus becomes the villain.

Because of society's lack of defined goals, the inhabitants of Miguel street put on social masks so as to survive the harsh realities of the street. Through masking they live in fantasy and make believe. Through the technique of masking Naipaul explores the cultural divide between the metropolitan culture and

that of the people of Trinidad. In the sketch 'B. Wordsworth', the protagonist views himself as a spiritual brother of his English namesake (William Wordsworth, the 18th century English romantic poet):

What your name , mister?
 'B. Wordsworth'
 'B. for bill?
 Black, Black Wordsworth
 White Wordsworth was my brother
 We share one heart, I can watch
 a small flower like the morning
 glory and cry (p 57-58)

Ironically this is just a form of masking, putting on a social facade. B. Wordsworth's image of himself as a Trinidadian Wordsworth represents only half the truth about him. Through the narrator we learn that Black Wordsworth tries to sell his poems for survival. The narrator links him to a Calypsonian. He finds it hard surviving by selling his poems and starts donning the image of the English romantic poet. Both roles fail to bring him real self fulfillment.

B. Wordsworth fantasy lies in his social façade. He becomes a victim of his metropolitan fantasy and Naipaul uses him to show what is likely to happen to people in a society that has no defined goals for them.

Like B. Wordsworth, those who aspire for the values of the metropolitan are equally disappointed. In the sketch 'His chosen calling', Elias sits the Cambridge examination on three occasions with little success and the narrator in *Miguel Street* comments, 'we felt it wasn't fair making a boy like Elias do litritcher and poultry(p 41), taking literature and poultry so as to become a medical doctor. This is Naipaul's satire not only on those aspiring for the European values but more significant the shortcoming of a colonial system of education.

The attempt of Titus Hoyt , I. A to bring literature and poultry to the boys of the street by forming the Miguel street literacy and social youth club proves equally abortive . The boys view this Latin lessons as being foreign (p 99). The use of foreign names such as B. Wordswoth , Titus Hoyt is evidence to the psychological colonial problem, a kind of masking meant to give the characters some sort of fulfillment. Ironically, this does not happen. The most absurd metropolitan fantasy is performed out by Man-Man. He assumes the role of hell-fire preacher and has a Christ complex when he stages his own crucifixion and he is eventually committed to a lunatic asylum.

Man- Man's masking is a result of what Naipaul views as the society's inability to create avenues of social mobility for its citizens. The citizens end up directing their energies in unproductive ventures (living a fantasy life) like metaphorically making things without a name or making fireworks and absurdly believing that the king and Queen of England would come to see their works.

As kunapipi (1981) observes, like B. Wordsworth, Elias and Titus Hoyt , Man-Man is a casualty of the society in which as Naipaul sees it success is a virtual impossibility. In the *Middle passage* Naipaul writes:

We lived in a society which denied
 Itself heroes . It was a place
 Where the stories were never
 Stories of success but of failure;
 Brilliant men , scholarship winners,
 Who had died young , gone mad
 Or taken to drink , cricketers
 of promise whose careers had
 been ruined by disagreement
 With the authorities

(*Middle Passage*, pp 43-44)

It is interesting how the above passage summarizes the pessimistic view of his Trinidadian society. Masking as a style therefore implies the failures in the inhabitants of Miguel street. Despite their surface resilience, virtually all the characters in *Miguel Street* seem paralyzed by their limiting environment.

The wit of the inhabitants of Miguel Street seems to be a projection of their paralysis, inner failures, resulting from society's lack of clearly defined goals. All the characters including Hat have constructed a personae which has enabled them to confront the world, but which involve running away from the truth about the self. The constructed personae is the ultimate symbolism of masking.

The interesting thing about *Miguel Street* is that the writer keeps on stripping away the masks that his characters wear. This stripping away of the masks allows him to expose the characters to the vulnerable society that believes them thus reinforcing the comic satire in the collection of sketches. However, although he strips away the masking which characters wear, Naipaul seems less concerned to expose their shortcomings satirically than to laugh at the futility of their wasted energies. Perhaps this is grounded in his pessimistic view of post war Trinidad.

In the first sketch of the book, 'Bogart' models himself on the American film star whose name he adopts. The imitation of foreign values and mannerism is central to *Miguel Street*. This is a technique of masking that communicates how the characters put on social facades so as to hide their true identity or survive the harsh realities of the street. Indeed, as one of the characters says, they laugh instead of crying

Ironically, the Bogart in Miguel street only puts on a mask. He appears to be a strong, silent man who has no need of women or family only to turn out later as a bigamist. He wants to be a man and to be a man he has to wear a social mask. This social façade drops when the truth about him is revealed. In a way, the idea of manliness in *Miguel Street* makes many characters put on masks. Naipaul's implication is that this idea is based on perverted kind of thinking, a thinking only upheld because of society's lack of defined goals for its people. The immortalization of the calypso that sings of Popo's criminality and celebrates it just shows how the society has degenerated. Popo's manliness is in line with the conception of the same on Miguel street.

The reality of the situation only dramatizes Popo's mask. He begins to drink heavily and wants to assault everyone. Hat ironically admits that Popo is '... a man, like any of we' (p 21). The truth is that Popo's drinking and belligerency are masks for his loneliness and it is not long before he leaves the street to win back Emelda.

In *Miguel Street* tragedy does not dominate directly because Naipaul also offers considerable humour through the technique of masking. Though the text is full of fun and humor it possesses manifold deep ideas about the problems of the society, of course in the time of World War II which has been interweaved by the context of the collection of sketches. The Boy narrator says, "*Hat used to say, Is a damn nuisance, having that man trying to be funny all the time, when all of we well know that he not so happy a tall*" (P. 79). Indirectly the text is the messenger of the plethora of agonies that developing countries or mainly postcolonial countries with an especial concentration on Caribbean region suffer with a very minor change in the world that make the people of the mentioned part to be stranger than the rest of the globe in some factors.

The young narrator who is one of the characters in the book befriends lots of people on Miguel Street. Most of the people on Miguel Street have a negative influence on the narrator, except his mother and B. Wordsworth. B. Wordsworth has a positive influence on the narrator. He shows him things he had never seen before. The narrator is surrounded by alcoholism (rum), abuse and prostitution on almost a daily basis.

It should clearly be noted that the concept of manliness on Miguel street is part of Naipaul's technique of masking. The men live in fantasy and even the treatment of their wives is a projection of their failures and the failures of their limiting environment.

Hat's brother, Edward, has a barren wife and has no child with her. The wife leaves to America and gets married to an American man without informing his first husband or divorcing. Eddoes says of this '*I didn't like she from the first and I don't think a man should married a woman who can't make baby*' (P.196). It is

crystal clear her leaving is not considered a bad action while the matter that makes her disrespectful for the residents is the absence of her power to bear children.

Furthermore, the inhabitants' illiteracy makes them to be more naïve in encountering the social happenings. They do not have the right to study or to be educated; their roles are to work hard inside or outside; this kind of life makes them assume different roles but from a masking perspective. The writer uses the masking style to satirize the values that they hold. For a instance it is evident that Man- Man, who turns assumes that he had spoken to God the previous night and even refers to himself as the new Messiah. The narrator reports, "*When Man-Man appeared, looking very thin and very holy, women cried and rushed to touch his gown.*" (P. 53)

One of the possible and most important factors of a society in considering its courtesy is its language spoken by its people. The style of language that most of the residents both adults and children use to speak in their daily communications with each other and outsiders is very coarse and mostly offensive, however, most of the times it is not the reason to make a person to be sad with this sort of language since it is a habit for them; even in their jokes and laughter this offensive language has a special place. Masking at the level of language is again a style that the writer uses to communicate the inhabitants inner psyche and satirize their living a lie by putting on social facades.

Naipaul views this masking as one of those reasons, along with the people's illiteracy that make society more obvious and outstanding in the matter of difference between underdeveloped and developed countries. They like insulting each other and sometimes call each other in a very bad way as if they welcome any insult from the others and they cannot bond without it. The abuses sometimes border of comic satire though a critical examination of the same reveals the author's vision of a society with no defined goals for its citizens.

When Uncle Bhakcu is stuck under the car repairing it, Hat is called by Bhakcu's wife to help him and he says to Bhakcu "*When you play the ass you bound to catch hell. The blasted car brand-new. What the hell he was tinkling with so?*" and in the answer Bhakcu replies shouting "*The moment you get this car from off me, I going to break up your tail*" (P. 148). The humorous conversation is rather comical but in the absurd aspect.

A critical evaluation of *Miguel Street* reveals this masking at language. Hat puts it correctly when he says to Edward half laughing and half serious, "Edward, you is my own brother, but you know you really is a son of a bitch" (P. 184). In *Miguel Street* we understand that in their childhood while Hat was the oldest of the family's children and among the nephew who lived with him since they had lost their fathers and mothers in their early childhood, Hat is considered as both their brother and father. Indeed he becomes the father voice to the narrator.

As is evident at the beginning of the last sketch, the young narrator says 'My mother said, You getting too wild in this place. I think is high time you leave. And go where? Venezuela?' I said. 'No, not Venezuela. Somewhere else, because the moment you land inVenezuela they go throw you in jail. I know you and I know Venezuela. No, somewhere else'(P.215).

The residents themselves know that their social pretense is masked in ventures and behavior that subscribes to the street's perverted life. They know that they have to find a way to escape this situation especially they want to put the children out of this bad speaking gangs; however, they are unable since it has become a habit for them to do like this and behave like this with each other. Escapism is also masked in overt pretense, crude behavior, living in fantasy and the rotten morals in the street.

The members of this street look for new and fresh happenings that make them adventurers, *Hat loved to make a mystery of the smallest things* (P. 199). They want to discover the world that cannot be found in theirs while they do not know what it is; this is the reason that makes them to be totally bewildered facing the questions from their own surroundings, The Policeman says, "What you doing here? B. Wordsworth said, "I have been asking myself the same question for forty years" (P. 60).The most disastrous problem could be this that you cannot understand the future and you cannot try to make it in a way that you love it. To assume that

they are okay in their limiting environment, they put on social masks and the writer uses the masking technique so as to communicate meaning and his artistic vision.

Escaping from the destiny and questions posed by environment, instead of fighting and finding their answers is the lowest and easiest work that a person would do without any attempt to stay but what will be the end of escape? As we see in the text the end of escape for the members of the street is just coming back without any result and outcome from their escape. The residents of Miguel Street are not a happy lot, they are only pretending to be happy, one of them goes mad, the other one's family is destroyed, the other one imprisoned for a while, the other one makes laugh of the residents. The narrator himself leaves the street to get educated abroad. Though he has a government scholarship, he has scanty information on what subject to study.

The interesting part of each of their stories in leaving and coming back to the street is the change that they all had undergo in varied ways which for some it is prideful and for the others just a repetition of the past, and for some it is irrelevant since there is no gain for them. It would be wished they knew what to do, they knew the meaning of life, future and family and the lost happiness that they could find it and keep it for good. Of course if all the members knew the answer to these questions and definitions there would not be the masking style that the writer uses, the overt pretense in the characters.

This text, which is one of the masterpieces in the Caribbean Literature, dramatizes the situation of human beings in a limiting environment. The author has done his best to display how a group of people in a small society like Miguel Street especially with its bizarre neighbours can live. It expresses a deep agony and tragedy in the face of humour that this that the text masks in satirizing the society's limitations and how the limitations affect its citizens. The problems are such far big that does not let the reader to view it as a comic or funny story. Uneducated individuals, cruel parents, indifferent neighbours, notorious husbands ,treacherous wives for husbands and street bullies are all values taken up to keep the inhabitants pretense.

It is clear that the residents of Miguel Street can be a symbol of a large society pretending to have the sympathy and emotions for each other while they think for their own benefits even ignoring those facing their children or wives. They live with each other but not for each other, of course with a lot of humor and fun that they know themselves that all are pretending to be happy. Their humour and fun are all aspects of masking.

Miguel Street portrays a variety of characters, a variety of ideas and assumptions and an assortment of themes that reveal to the reader aspects of fictional Trinidad and the perspectives of those living that life through the eyes of the boy narrator who narrates the stories of the different characters on Miguel street. The text portrays the lives of those people with whom the narrator comes into contact with on Miguel Street. These characters, if they are to be so labeled are brought to life through the eyes of the nameless boy acting as narrator.

Though narrated from the first person point of view however, the namelessness of the narrator suggests a distant omniscience about the narrator and what he reveals about the characters. The characters are Naipaul's perceptive revelations of his view on lower-class urban society in Trinidad that is brought to the reader through an assortment of views, perspectives, symbols and themes that permeate the entire novel. A theme is a principal idea or fundamental meaning of a literary piece. It differs from the subject of a piece in that, the subject, is the topic on which the author has chosen to write, while a theme is an expression about that topic. Themes can be of either kind, major or minor. A major theme is an idea that the author returns to again and again as it becomes what the plot of the story revolves around. A minor theme on the other hand appears from time to time but is not the focus of the story.

Miguel Street revolves around a number of themes that are presented throughout the novel and revealed to the reader through the actions of the characters and the observations the narrator makes. The themes are part of the writer's communication and meaning. Most dominant of these themes are: The embracing of escapism in an attempt to cope with the futility of inner-city life, postcolonial fragments and their influence on the disadvantaged in the society and women who, though marginal/invisible, take charge of the fraying fabric of their family and community relationships.

The characters in the text are organized according to the 'insiders'; the narrator, Hat, Boyee and Errol, who are ever present and run concurrently with the themes throughout the sketches; and the 'outsiders' who are residents on the street but come and go as the plot develops. The plot refers to the structured format of the conflict in a piece of work. The plot of each sketch revealed to us by Naipaul, through the eyes of his child narrator shows explicitly the futility of the characters in their world. This is kind of futility that forces them to live in fantasy or pretense. This purports therefore, the necessity of the theme, the embracing of escapism in an attempt to cope with the futility of inner-city life

The book commences with the story of Bogart, a man who is nicknamed after the famous actor Humphrey Bogart, who seeks to escape the 'little room' in which he spends his days on Miguel Street playing Patience, which was what they called him before calling him Bogart. He is a man without an identity, without a name, without a place in the world which is shown as evident when he temporarily leaves Miguel Street and it was as if "he had never come to Miguel Street" (p.3)

His intermittent arrivals and disappearances from the street reveal his attempts to put off a static nature and adopt an escapist nature in response to the superfluous life he is living. His whole life on Miguel Street is a charade, but to him it becomes real. He assumes the persona of the actor and moves towards; Americanization American accent, chewing of gum, how he smokes in an attempt to find the real world. His escape can also be seen in light of the fact that he could not produce a child with his Tunapuna wife and he goes elsewhere and impregnates another woman to prove his virility.

His leaving his woman though shows that escapism transcends all common sense and law, because regardless of the fact that he now father's a child and that he is being charged with bigamy, Bogart still feels compelled to escape from what is. The story of Man-Man also brings out the theme of escapism. Man-man is often referred to as a mad man by the people of Miguel Street and his only friend was his dog with which he is compared. When the dog dies though, Man-man spirals downward. His loss of companionship causes him to become a recluse and a deep sense of reverence possesses him.

He exclaims he has seen God and assumes a "Messiah like" figure for the people of Miguel Street and they in turn follow him in an attempt to get a sense of relief or escape from their circumstances. His lack of depth becomes apparent when he screams at the people to stone him and is reduced to cursing the crowd when they do, because after all, he is only playing a part. The story of B. Wordsworth is seemingly the most apt example of the embrace of escapism in an attempt to deal with the futility of inner-city life; masking as Naipaul's style of satirizing the society and characters therein.

B. Wordsworth lives in a dream; he admires the attributes of the poet William Wordsworth, but does nothing to achieve them. He constantly trained the child artist but did nothing to culture the artist in himself. He has not achieved anything in reality, as his dreams are all in his head, in the world of happiness he has created to deal with his reality. The element of escapism is very pungent throughout this story, as B. Wordsworth aids in the narrators escape from the realities of his mother's abuse as he helps him create a fantasy world in which to hide.

It is in the street where the boys learn attitudes, values and behaviours associated with maleness through witnessing and internalizing the experiences of other males on the street. Naipaul paints the picture of the street as a male gendered space in *Miguel Street*. This allows for the construction of masculine identities in the novel in relation to love and intimacy, work and leisure and the treatment of women.

Love and Intimacy are taken lightly. It is evident that in order to be considered manly on *Miguel Street* a male must be unfaithful. One example of this is portrayed in the very first chapter, "Bogart". Bogart is considered ... "a man among we men..." because he leaves his wife who cannot bear children to have children with another woman in Caroni, whom he then has to marry. He leaves that woman because his desire is not to be a father, but to prove his manliness. Being able to father a child is considered an achievement of manhood.

The men on *Miguel Street* have a very relaxed attitude with regard to work and a very active one pertaining to play. They are portrayed as having little to no ambition. For most, life is predominantly spent in leisure activities. Bogart is a prime example of this. He is called Patience "...because he played that game from

morn till night.” Although there is the allusion of work because of a sign outside his house, his identity is not marked by work but by play. He is not known for his skill as a tailor as the narrator observes, “He made a pretence of making a living by tailoring...I cannot remember him making a suit”. These sentiments of play hard and work hardy are echoed throughout the chapter and the rest of the novel as the process of gender socialization evolves.

The portrayal of women in *Miguel Street* is almost always reflected in physical violence and abuse as domestic violence is what makes a man, a man. Men expect their wives to be both obedient and loyal otherwise “set straight” by being beaten. Hat summarizes one attitude towards women shared by men when he teaches the narrator that; “Is a good thing for a man to beat his woman every now and then”. In the sketch, **The Mechanical Genius**’ in order to prove he is the man of his household, Mr. Bhakcu resorts to beating his wife because she refuses to be the submissive.

Another portrayal of women is that they are required to do all the work. Most men in the street did not have a steady job. Popo states that “Women and them like work. Man not make for work”. The narrator observes that “Popo never made any money. His wife used to go out and work, and this was easy, because they had no children.” This comment trivialises the positive portrayal of Popo’s wife as the sole breadwinner of the household by saying “this was easy, because they had no children.” It shows what little respect the boys on *Miguel Street* are being socialised to have towards women. The idea of manliness is a result of drinking, fighting and crimes such as theft. This is seen when Popo’s wife leaves him and as a result he drinks, fights and steals which “made him an accepted member of the gang”.

Women are also portrayed as greedy and materialistic. When Popo’s wife returns to *Miguel Street*, Hat is disgusted; “You see the sort of thing woman is...You see the sort of thing they like. Not the man. But the new house paint up, and all the new furniture inside it. I bet you if the man in Arima had a new house and new furnitures, she wouldnta come back with Popo.”

The dominant pattern in *Miguel street* centres on an ironic exposure of the pretence of manliness. For instance, Big Foot , the bully of the street is revealed to be a coward . Nathaniel ’s espousal of the philosophy of ‘knock them down’ shocks the other male chauvinists of Miguel street when Nathaniel is beaten up by his own woman. Hat had anticipated this unmasking of Nathaniel’s character . When it is discovered that Edward also receives beatings from his woman, Eddoes says, ‘it look like they make up that calypso about men not women’(p.112).

Morgan’s mask is stripped when his wife returns home to find him in bed with another woman. Though Morgan has ten children and prides himself on his virility this exposure of his pretense of manliness makes him a laughing stock of the street. The inhabitants taunt his virility. The wife makes situations for him worse:

Leave the light on, come, let we show the big hero
to the people in the street, come, let we
show them what man really make like, you is real
man. You ain’t only make ten children with me, you
going to make more with somebody else (p.89)

It is a demeaning experience for Morgan, with the wife holding him up by the waist for all the people in the street to see his puny near-naked body. Morgan’s virility and sense of manliness are all masks used to cover up his weaknesses.

The story of Laura in the sketch **The maternal instinct** plays a significant role in *Miguel Street*. The sketch serves to bring out what is latent throughout *Miguel Street*: the society is fundamentally matrilineal. Perhaps this clearly explains why almost all the male characters in the book put on social masks. It is the males’ psychological need to assert his threatened manhood in aggressive macro postures.

In the sketches, **George and the pink house** and **Bogart**, Naipaul combines the masking technique with calypso style to dramatize the influence of American values on Trinidadians. Like Bogart, Edward adopts

the mannerism of Hollywood film actor and, as is also the case with Bogart, has assumption of the person of a 'tough guy' is an attempt to hide his inner insecurity.

The story of Hat is even more intriguing. The story begins with an account of Hat's taking twelve boys to an inter-island cricket match. At the ground Hat tells the onlookers that all twelve boys are his own and gets soft drinks at a discount price as a result. One wonders why a man should collect twelve boys and claim that they are his own. Hat successfully combines the pose of virility with the attributes of the trickster. The narrator says of him:

He taught me many things that afternoon.
From the way he pronounced them, I learned
about the beauty of cricketers' names, and he
gave me all his own excitement at watching a cricket match (p.201)

Though the narrator believes that Hat leads an idyllic existence free from the entanglements with women which seems to complicate the lives of most of the street's me, this view is rather superficial. Hat is no different from the rest. He also puts on a mask, he is far from being sufficient. His brother's Edward, flight reveals Hat's insufficiency. He starts visiting brothels at port of Spain and ends up bringing a woman, Dolly, to his house, and later into his life. When Dolly deserts him for another man, his pursuit of Dolly lands him in jail.

He emerges from the prison only to find the narrator now a grown up. He refers to the narrator as 'a big man (p.213) and their relationship changes. The narrator reflects on the three years that hat had been away:

A long time. But it was just three years,
three years in which I had grown up and looked
critically at the people around me. I no longer wanted
to be like Eddoes. He was so weak and thin and I
hadn't realized that he was so small. Titus Hoyt was
stupid and boring, and not funny at all. Everything had
changed. When Hat went to jail, part of me had died (p.213-214)

In this reflection lies the narrator's psychological and emotional transformation. His juxtaposition with characters putting on masks has made him reflect more. He has to chart out a course for his own life, but the street's life cannot allow this. When he drifts into drinking and womanizing, he is being a man as per the street's version. But his mother comes to his rescue and sends him abroad for study. This escape from the limiting environment is viewed by the writer as the best option for self-fulfillment of the dwellers of Miguel street.

The masking technique paints Naipaul as pessimistic writer for his view Trinidad as having nothing positive for the self-fulfillment of its citizens. The notion of manliness on Miguel street is rather perverted and the men wear and put on social masks as ways of hiding their inner weaknesses. Living in a matriarchal society has hit them hard. The ironies we see in characters such as Nathaniel telescope, the inner psychological problem in the men of Miguel Street.

How long the characters put on the mask also contributes to the writer's aims and objectives. It is interesting that all the masked characters are unmasked at the end but only after the writer has used them to satirize the vulnerable masses who are easily duped by the facades on the faces of weak, insecure and coward characters pretending to be "laughing instead of crying".

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